

**WE CAN ONLY BE SAFE IF ALL OF US ARE!
A CALL FOR AN URGENT ACTION TO FIGHTING COVID 19
27 April 2020**

Corona virus 2019 [COVID–19] pandemic has been a shock to the world. It has affected Nepal too with the confirmation of 48 infected cases out of which 9 affected people are recovered, and 86 people in isolation as of April 23. COVID-19 has a direct bearing on the lives of people, their livelihoods and economy, be it big or small, among others.

We are all being personally affected by the virus. It preys most on the vulnerable and people in poverty and inequality. Girls and women are to suffer the most as they work in informal economy, where social protection and health insurance is non-existent, and income is not secure. They are in poorly paid jobs, care work that we depend upon, and are in high risk of domestic and gender-based violence under the lockdown conditions. In 21 days of lockdown, 86 cases of rape and 72 cases of domestic violence have been reported in various parts of the country. In the condition where the home is the only place to stay, the survivors are in even graver danger.¹

The resulting economic crisis owing to the pandemic is going to be a huge problem. The shrinking economic activities have taken its toll on Small and Medium Entrepreneurs (SMEs), small traders, smallholder farmers as they are disconnected with market to sell their products and earn for living because of the prolonged lockdown. They are worried about their cash flow, paying interest and instalment of loans and maintaining supply chain, and production cycles. The outbreak of virus has hit almost all sectors of Nepali economy, and an estimated prediction shows that the country will have to bear \$ 36.78 million dollars loss with 15,880 job cuts depending on the impact of virus.²

Corona virus exposes and exploits the inequality that defines our society. It exploits inequality between rich and poor. In the already poor and weak health system, the poor people are more likely to be drowned in debts. Inequality for women who are in insecure and poorly paid jobs is alarming. Migrant workers, daily wage workers, families supporting children, Dalits, LGBTI, elderly and persons with disabilities will be more affected with this crisis

We all deeply need one another to fight this virus. Pandemic and economic crisis can be solved by unity and cooperation. It is only through solidarity that we can achieve victory against this virus and other crisis coming our way. Cooperation is urgently needed on economic front too. Given the nature of our economy and of supply chain, we need a clear country plan of action and we need it implement fast and transparently. We wish to express our encouragement to all individuals, communities, civil society members, private sector and government authorities at all levels working day and night to beat the virus and extend our solidarity with survivors and those affected by it.

We know that only immensely ambitious political action by the governments and acting together can overcome this crisis. This is the time for the governments and the political leaders to take decisive and bold actions. Therefore, we urge the governments at all levels – local, provincial and federal – to:

- Prepare short-term, mid-term and long-term plans to tackle COVID-19.

¹ https://www.nayapatrikadaily.com/news-details/41628/2020-04-20?fbclid=IwAR2_gDKp983zFw3bL2qJhmveE2Ae7AVQeCRRuJN2-KcAMBEMHPKvap4MvPs retrieved on 25 April, 2020.

² <https://www.spotlightnepal.com/2020/03/15/coronavirus-economic-cost/?fbclid=IwAR3OxtEQXVRqKxKg1UQEa7PV8lay0EBv1gx14jStkWvy30v5rWvOsBXPpQY>, retrieved on 16 April 2020.

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- **Provide cash grants to all those who are in dire need of them:** The governments must priorities a massive increase in social protection benefits, providing cash grants, particularly, to daily wage workers, women engaged in informal economy and insecure jobs, families supporting children, elderly or persons with disabilities and migrant workers. It must be sufficient to survive and run their lives until the crisis comes to normal. The present social protection scheme should be modified to meet the daily needs of all of these people at regular basis.
- **Bailout packages for businesses** with due priority to support the small and medium entrepreneurs and businesses who have the least ability to cope with the crisis. SMEs are worried about maintaining the supply chain, human resources and production cycles, farmers are disconnected with market to sell their products and earn for living. A comprehensive bailout package for them to revive the broken enterprises and farm products is imperative.
- **Unleash economic stimulus** package that includes social assistance to the people who have lost their jobs and income as a result of the crisis and are struggling to help their families through this crisis. Prioritise a comprehensive public health plan to save lives – including delivering clean water, sanitation and public health promotion programmes, supporting food security, protection and promotion of agricultural farming at all levels and getting cash to those most in need.
- **Strengthen public service distribution system** to strengthen and enhance public services that can ensure accountability and transparency. This is the right time to reform our entire governance system that will be helpful to combat COVID-19. The system will be immensely supportive to reach out to the unreached, reduce inequality and ensure access to services of the marginalised and vulnerable communities.
- **Strictly follow the COVID-19 decorum that the** World Health Organization (WHO) has introduced internationally for its member states who have been implementing across the world. Based on this protocol, countries are preparing and operating their national level protocol or decorum. We urge the governments (federal, province and local levels) to strictly follow its decorum. The concerns of stranded people in different parts of the country have to be settled but the safety and security protocols issued by the government must be strictly followed by all the people
- **Ensure market for the local products** – with the outbreak of COVID-19, the local products are being wasted due to lack of transportation facilities. We urge the governments to ensure proper and safe market for these products within and outside the local level institutions.
- **Rebuild the foundation of our economy** shifting irreversibly towards a sustainable, more equal and human economy where the government works for all. We call the government to ensure largest ever public health investment and make sure that all citizens have access to free public healthcare.
- **Commit that Covid-19 response is with a GESI analysis** of short and long-term impacts on women, girls, Dalits, poor and marginalised communities, gender diverse people based on various identity factors and categories to advance and sustain women's rights. Government's interventions must be guided by the robust GESI analysis with meaningful participation of feminist organisations and focus on access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, prevention and reduction of, and response to reduction of gender-based violence, and support the economic and food security for single headed households and women, among others.
- **Take actions at all levels to tackle sexual** abuse and gender-based violence with utmost importance to ensure the physical safety of the vulnerable groups. We call the concerned authorities to place necessary mechanisms to report, solve and rehabilitate the victims with strict enforcement of law at all levels and activate case management as well as referral mechanisms at all the levels of government to prevent, report, and respond to cases on all forms of abuse and violence against women and children.
- **Coordinate and ensure international communities' commitment** to protect employees, working abroad, on the ground of the protection of humanity by ensuring accountability. Government should coordinate and put collective efforts to ensure that development partners prioritise funding based on the country needs in the post COVID-19 scenario as the country will witness resource gap in coming days.
- **Extend support to community radio stations** through partnerships and collaboration so that the local media can continue to serve the people with information required to deal with the corona virus. Community radio stations and journalists risk their lives to serve up-to-date and most important

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information to community members in rural and semi-rural areas. But the global and national downturn in the economy due to COVID-19 is being felt heavily by the local media as well. Their income has taken a serious impact and they are facing an existential threat.

We must act now to save the lives and kick-start the future that we need to hope again. We cannot wait. Therefore, we urge government to rebuild the country where social protection, universal health care, free and quality education for all are guaranteed to lay the foundation of a sustainable future.

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1. National Alliance for Human Rights and Social Justice Nepal (Human Rights Alliance)
2. Jagaran Media Centre (JMC)
3. Karnali Integrated Rural Development and Research Centre (KIRDARC Nepal)
4. Rural Women Creative Forum (RWCF)
5. Nepal Participatory Action Network (NEPAN)
6. Jagriti Children and Youth Concern Nepal (JCYCN)
7. Nepal Disable Human Rights Centre (DHRC Nepal)
8. Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (ACORAB Nepal)
9. The World Association of Community Radio Broadcasting (AMARC – Asia Pacific)
10. Centre for Ethnic and Alternative Development Studies (CEADS)
11. SOLVE Nepal

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Note: Formed on 11th May 2015, HAMI is the convergence of the CSOs working particularly with the right holders works as emergency aid management watchdog by creating its linkages with different national and international arenas so as to obtain and validate recognition from state and non-state actors in the national level as well as by the international communities, it monitors the attempts and activities made by the government, international communities, non-government and private sectors through continuous efforts of evidences based advocacy and lobby. National Alliance for Human Rights and Social Justice Nepal (Human Rights Alliance) is the secretariat of HAMI.